



# *CITY COUNCIL*

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## ***Public Works Committee***

***Tuesday, January 17, 2012***  
***Meeting Report***

**Committee Members Attending:** D. Sterner, S. Marmarou, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz acting Chair

**Others Attending:** S. Katzenmoyer, C. Jones, L. Lee

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz, acting Chair, called the Public Works Committee meeting to order at 5:42 pm.

### **Special Parking Provisions in Metered Areas**

- Downtown Loading Zones and Drop Off Requests

Mr. Jones stated that he receives many requests for these items in downtown areas that are metered parking spaces. He described a situation on N 5<sup>th</sup> St where a drop off was requested very close to a pull in area which has already been designated for drop off.

Mr. Lee agreed and stated that there is also a grace period for some meters and a grace period at a nearby parking garage which allows entrance for drop off and to continue out without incurring the parking fee. He requested that no metered spaces be lost. The Committee agreed with Mr. Lee regarding the loss of metered spaces.

Mr. Jones stated that he has already met with Mr. Lee regarding this issue and they have come to agreement. He noted his wish to inform Council in case phone calls are received.

Chief Heim arrived at this time.

Mr. Jones described a loading zone request at an intersection which already has loading zones on two of the four corners. He stated that he and Mr. Lee have agreed not to grant this request.

Mr. Jones noted a request for a church space on the street at 5<sup>th</sup> & Cherry Sts. He stated that the space will be posted for church purposes during designated times but that those using the space will need to comply with the meter regulations. The Committee agreed with this compromise.

Ms. D'Auria arrived at this time.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need for consistency in City policy. She noted that the City does not contain enough on-street parking spaces to accommodate residents. She also noted the need to keep the metered spaces for turnover in the downtown area.

- Merchants' Parking Permit

Mr. Sterner stated that he recently attended a community meeting hosted by the Parking Authority regarding this issue.

Mr. Lee explained that this program began as a pilot program during the tenure of his predecessor. He stated that merchants in the 000 block of S 9<sup>th</sup> St and the 000 and 100 blocks of N 9<sup>th</sup> St are able to purchase a parking permit for \$100 annually which allows them to park all day in front of their stores. He stated that the program was never approved by Council.

Mr. Lee stated that merchants and residents were in attendance at the community meeting. He stated that there are 44 businesses in these blocks and only 14 have the permits. He stated that those with permits want to park in front of their business all day. He stated that this seems contrary to the metered concept of turnover to increase business patrons.

Mr. Lee stated that the Parking Authority board is requesting Council review of the issue and recommends approving the merchant permit. He requested that Council consider that allowing this type of permit may expand the program to other downtown areas.

Chief Heim stated his opinion that this permit goes against the customer turnover generally supported by business owners. He stated that long term parking should be in the downtown garages. He stated that the 9<sup>th</sup> St corridor has a constant problem with double parking. He stated that residents will also want access to these permits as they have problems locating on-street parking. He reminded Council that many business owners do not own the properties in which they are located. He stated that this began as a pilot program but never ended.

Mr. Marmarou agreed with the problem of double parking on this corridor.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that merchants use the parking garages. She noted the need for residents to have access to parking.

Mr. Lee reminded the Committee that an article appeared in the Reading Eagle on this issue several weeks ago. He stated that residents are complaining that they cannot find on-street parking and that they must feed the meters but merchants have full-day access to street spaces at a reduced rate.

Mr. Sterner suggested that if Council approves the program that the permit fee be increased as

this \$100 fee has been charged for many years and never increased. He noted that if the program is cancelled that merchants will appear to speak before Council to complain. He stated that the Parking Authority Board approves of the concept of this permit but that he, Mr. Lee, and Chief Heim do not.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that this issue also has economic development implications. She suggested that this issue be referred back to the Administration before action is taken by Council. She described a property on Perkiomen Ave which was developed into three businesses but has no off-street parking available.

Mr. Sterner questioned if Mr. Lee could cancel the program without Council approval. Mr. Lee stated that he can. He stated that he has already extended the program through the end of January. He noted his discomfort with continuing a program that has not been approved. He stated that he needs a decision from Council.

Mr. Marmarou stated that the parking lot at 9<sup>th</sup> & Court is underutilized. He stated that the owner has been contacted in the past. Mr. Lee stated that access has been refused in the past.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need to know who owns the parking lot. She suggested that the owner be approached again as the City helped to fund that project. She suggested that the Administration lead the dialog and discuss this issue again at the February Public Works Committee.

Mr. Lee was amenable to extending the program to the end of February.

Mr. Jones stated that he will update the Administration on this issue.

Mr. Sterner noted the need for the Administration to be aware of this issue and that the program should not continue without Council approval.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that this issue will begin occurring in other parts of the City.

### **Update Recreation Commission**

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz reported that a candidate for Executive Director is being approached with an offer. She stated that the candidate is not a City resident but is familiar with the City.

### **Seek Sponsorships for Parks and Park Maintenance**

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested delaying this discussion until the Recreation Commission executive director has been named.

Mr. Jones stated that there are already agreements in place for some areas. He stated that Masano is caring for the islands on Hancock and Brookline at Lancaster Av.

Chief Heim noted the problems these plantings are creating with officers being unable to see activity in the large parking lots adjacent to the islands. He stated that this is a major concern.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if permits were obtained for these plantings. Mr. Jones stated that none were issued.

Mr. Marmarou suggested that they be requested to remove the items since there are no permits.

Mr. Jones explained that Masano began mowing the islands in 2010 and planted flowers. He stated that the plantings have greatly increased this year.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz expressed her belief that this is occurring City-wide as people are “caring” for City property without permission. She noted the need for formal agreements and again suggested working with the executive director of the Recreation Commission.

Mr. Sterner stated that the public safety issues need to be addressed and suggested contact be made with Masano. Chief Heim noted his willingness to visit Masano and discuss the issues with them.

### **Traffic Ordinances**

Mr. Jones stated that there are two ordinances on Council’s agenda. He stated that he is requesting that 4<sup>th</sup> & Oley become a four-way stop. He also stated that a local business has requested to change 1/2 block of Division St to two way. He stated that the business located in this area cannot receive deliveries with this portion being only one-way. He stated that without this action by Council, the business will be forced to relocate.

### **Other Items**

- 1700 block Muhlenberg St

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that residents have been questioning if this is an open street. She stated that it is paved and that it begins as an alley but then becomes wider. She stated that she has requested assistance from Ms. Katzenmoyer who was unable to determine the status. Mr. Jones stated that he will look into the status.

- Stormwater Utility

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted that the Administration has requested that Council re-open the 2012 budget. She questioned if the Stormwater Utility is included. Mr. Jones stated that it is not at this time but that he continues work on the issue.

The meeting adjourned at 6:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted by  
*Shelly Katzenmoyer, Deputy City Clerk*